SEX EQUITY IN OUR SCHOOLS: A GUIDELINE FOR ACTION

Authorized by the Minister of Education
Honourable Shirley Dysart

Department of Education
Province of New Brunswick

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

It is a pleasure for me to authorize Sex-Equity in Our Schools: A Guideline for Action and to commend its use to trustees, district and school administrators, and teachers throughout our school system.

The document is intended to highlight basic principles and to suggest supporting actions related to sex-equity in schools. Its implementation should serve to improve opportunities for developing and maintaining a nonsexist learning environment in which every student is an individual worthy of the school's support and attention.

As we move closer to the beginning of the 21st century it is essential that our schools capture the spirit of the new age. It will be a world of divergent thinkers and problem solvers who will be able to adapt to changing conditions. Hopefully, it will be a society where there is no longer room for narrowness and the limitations imposed by gender bias and systemic discrimination.

Sex-Equity in Our Schools is a blueprint for action. It will require the full commitment of the public school community to ensure its successful implementation. I am confident that we will meet the challenge.

Shirley Dysart

February, 1989

Shirley Dysart
Minister

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Project Team

Pam Campbell, Principal
Liverpool Street School
Fredericton, N.B.

Basil Hurley, Principal
Oromocto High School
Oromocto, N.B.

Joanne LeBlanc-Haley
Vice-Principal
Royal Road Elementary School
Fredericton, N.B.

John Walsh
Vice-Principal
Nashwaaksis Junior High School
Fredericton, N.B.

Review Groups

School District Superintendents
School Supervisors
N.B. Teachers' Association
N.B.T.A. Women's Issues Committee
School Trustees
Parents
Minister's Advisory Committee on Women's Issues

Department Staff

Titania Tremblay
Family Studies Consultant

Darlene Whitehouse
Coordinator, Elementary Education

Elizabeth J. Owens, Director
Program Development and Implementation Branch and
Senior Advisor on Women's Issues in Education

INTRODUCTION

In November, 1987, the Minister of Education, the Honourable Shirley Dysart, authorized the document **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS AND BOYS - A COMMITMENT TO SEX-EQUITY**. The document presented a number of principles aimed at ensuring that the public schools provide equal opportunities for girls and boys in an environment that is free from bias and sex-role stereotyping. While this first document provided a general framework for sex-equity in the public school system, it did not address the specific roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education, the school district, and the school themselves. **SEX-EQUITY IN OUR SCHOOLS: A GUIDELINE FOR ACTION** is intended to promote department, district and school activities that will support the sex-equity principles related to Curriculum, Student Services, School Organization and Administration.

The issue of sex-equity touches all aspects of public schooling in visible as well as subtle ways. Insufficient numbers of female role-models, lack of directed counselling programs, and limited materials on the contributions of women in our society, are some of the visible barriers to sex-equity. The subtle barriers that include sexist language, school environment, outdated attitudes, and narrow expectations reinforce the traditional philosophy of distinct hierarchial roles for males and females in our society. To remove these barriers that currently limit opportunities for our students will require much energy and a conscious effort by school trustees, parents, administrators and teachers. The policies, curriculum, teaching methods and the general school environment must signal to every student that the school recognizes every individual as a person of worth and potential.

The current document is organized under three headings: Curriculum, Student Services, and School Organization and Administration. Each section contains sex-equity principles accompanied by supporting activities appropriate for the department, the district, and the school. A concluding section provides a summary and some comments relative to future direction.

I. CURRICULUM

Equality of Access Principle

All courses of study must be accessible to students regardless of the student's sex. No student should be denied access to a course of study because of the student's sex.

Supporting Activities

Department of Education	District	School
Review all curriculum and course requirements for barriers that might prevent male or female enrollment.	Monitor student handbooks, course descriptions, and course scheduling to ensure that all information is unbiased and encourages both male and female enrollment.	Ensure that all student handbooks, course descriptions, and course scheduling inform students that all courses of study are available to both males and females.
	Advise schools that protective clothing should be in sizes to accommodate all students (e.g., safety glasses, welding gloves, aprons, sports equipment, etc.).	Ensure that all protective clothing is available in a variety of sizes. Ensure that change areas and washrooms are available for both males and females.
Collect and distribute statistics on male and female enrollment in senior high school courses.	Ensure that all guidance personnel, department heads, school administrators and teachers receive and review course enrollment statistics in order to analyze the trends for their district.	Ensure that school-based male/female course enrollment information is used when advising students on course selections.
	Monitor courses that traditionally attract a disproportionate number of either sex and encourage a better balance of males and females.	Encourage a better balance of males and females in those courses that traditionally attract a disproportionate number of either sex.

Department of Education	District	School
Encourage cooperative education and/or work education programs that provide opportunities for all students regardless of the student's sex.	Support cooperative education and/or work education programs that provide opportunities for all students regardless of the student's sex.	Provide employers participating in the work education program with information that promotes and encourages the involvement of both males and females in the broad variety of jobs and work environments. Organize work opportunities that allow students to experience both traditional and non-traditional occupations. Organize opportunities for potential employers to visit the classroom and view students involved in non-traditional tasks.

Sexism in Instructional Materials Principle

Print and non-print materials prescribed for use in the school be unbiased and nonsexist.

S u p p o r t i n g A c t i v i t i e s

Department of Education	District	School
Develop a policy and guidelines for detecting sex-bias in print and non-print materials. Provide curriculum committees with information on detecting bias and stereotyping in print and non-print materials.	Ensure that the policy and guidelines are available to schools for their use.	Use Departmental guidelines for detecting sex-bias when selecting support materials.

Department of Education	District	School
Ensure that new print and non-print materials are evaluated for bias and stereotyping as part of the curriculum development process.		
Encourage the removal of currently used sex-biased print and non-print material and where removal is not possible, provide teaching suggestions for using these materials.		
Prepare and distribute lists of appropriate supplementary materials to redress curriculum imbalance.	Encourage schools to purchase supplementary materials which redress curriculum imbalance.	Refer to the list of materials identified by the Department to redress curriculum imbalance when ordering supplementary resources.

II. STUDENT SERVICES

School Guidance and Counselling Principles

School guidance and counselling from grades 1 to 12 should strive to assist both male and female students to recognize the expanding roles of men and women and to encourage the exploration of the full range of options open to them as members of society.

Supporting Activities

Department of Education	District	School
Distribute an annotated bibliography of appropriate materials that recognizes the expanding roles of females and males in society.	Encourage schools to use appropriate career materials which recognize non-traditional areas of study for females and males.	Expose students to a variety of materials that recognize non-traditional careers for men and women. Provide parents with materials which describe the expanding roles of females and males in society.
Encourage career awareness in elementary school, career exploration in junior high school and career preparation in senior high school through the provision of curriculum components and resource materials.	Assist elementary, junior high and senior high schools with the implementation of career-related curriculum.	Implement career-related curriculum in elementary, junior and senior high schools. Integrate the topic of careers into all subject areas at the elementary level. Organize career expos, career days and career weeks and encourage parents to attend. (Grades 1-12)

Department of Education	District	School
		Provide opportunities for all students to participate in a a computer-assisted career selection program including post-secondary educational opportunities across Canada.
Provide high school personnel with male/ female enrollment statistics in math, science and technology to be used in counselling students for post-secondary program selection.	Encourage schools to increase female enrollment in math, science and technology courses in preparation for post-secondary program selection.	Ensure that post-secondary interviewers encourage female students to select math, science and technology re-related programs at the post-secondary level.
Collect data on sex-ratios in high school courses and activities on an annual basis and provide school districts with suggestions for using this data to assist students in their course selection.	Ensure that schools use data on sex-ratios in high school courses and activities to assist students in their course selection.	Implement the given suggestions for using sex-ratio course data when counselling students.

Students at Risk Principle

Students at risk are a target population that need to be identified as early as possible and provided with appropriate services.

NOTE: *For the purpose of this document, at risk students are those students who are likely to leave school without completing their program.*

Supporting Activities

Department of Education	District	School
Research and identify early signs and characteristics of school-age at-risk students, including students who are single parents and/or returnees.		
Provide information for appropriate personnel on recognizing early signs and characteristics of students at-risk.	Provide information sessions for school personnel on the recognition of early signs and characteristics of at-risk students.	
Continue to make available to school districts information on at-risk students and materials which focus on family violence, handling violent behavior in school, child abuse, depression, eating disorders, loss/grief, and other related topics.	Continue to provide school personnel with information on at-risk students and materials on family violence, handling violent behavior in schools, and child abuse, depression, eating disorders, loss/grief and others, as they become available.	Use the resource materials provided to assist at-risk students and where appropriate provide information to parents.
	Develop a clear and direct referral system for at-risk students that is easily accessed and that eventuates in appropriate services for the students.	Provide feedback on the effectiveness of the referral system and the resulting follow-up for at-risk students.
	Provide information to teachers on the district referral system for at-risk students.	
Compile and distribute to districts and schools information on possible service providers at the provincial and community levels.	Keep an updated file on local community service providers for at-risk students and make this information available to all schools.	Become familiar with the information on provincial and local service providers for at-risk students.
Support initiatives for alternative educational opportunities for at-risk students.	Develop alternative educational opportunities for at-risk students.	Provide appropriate counselling and alternative educational opportunities for at-risk students.
Disseminate provincial statistics on programs for at-risk students.	Collect and analyze data on identified at-risk students in the district.	Support efforts to collect data on at-risk students.

III. SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

School Environment Principle

Students must be educated in a learning environment that promotes equal opportunity and encourages sex-equity in all aspects of the school's curriculum, communication, policies, teaching methods, and assessment procedures, as well as in the attitudes of staff towards each other and towards students.

Supporting Activities

Department of Education	District	School
Develop and distribute policy and guidelines on the use of all-inclusive language in communication.	Support the implementation of the all-inclusive language policy.	Use the guidelines for all-inclusive language. Encourage all visitors addressing students to comply with the Department of Education policy on all-inclusive language by ensuring that these individuals are provided with the guidelines prior to presentations. Support a positive non-sexist school climate wherein both staff and students assume non-traditional roles in a variety of activities.
	Inform all teachers of available positions on school or district committees and encourage participation. Ensure that teaching staff have an equal opportunity to be selected to participate on school and district level community projects, task forces and other related activities.	

Department of Education	District	School
Continue to inform all teachers of professional development activities and teaching enrichment opportunities, e.g. teacher exchange programs.	Encourage all teaching staff members to participate in professional development activities.	Support and participate in cooperative planning for professional development activities to ensure that the events are of interest to all teaching staff.
	Encourage and support teaching enrichment opportunities by attempting to select an equitable number of male/female teachers for professionally enriching experiences.	Support the participation of colleagues in teaching enrichment opportunities.
		Participate in the planning of teaching assignments as the organization for a new year is being developed.
		Support teachers who try new teaching assignments.
Continue to support professional development activities aimed at preparing female/male teachers for positions of responsibility in order to redress the current imbalance.	Provide on an annual basis a five-year statistical projection re openings in positions of responsibility and encourage teachers to prepare for such positions.	Support and participate in workshops aimed at preparing teaching staff for positions of responsibility.
Encourage appropriate professional development for newly appointed administrators. This would include school and district-based personnel.		
Encourage appropriate professional development for school trustees on sex-equity issues.		
Review and revise criteria for provincially sponsored scholarships, bursaries, prizes and other student awards to ensure, where possible, that their distribution is based upon merit and ability rather than on the sex of the student.	Review and revise criteria for for existing awards and, where possible, award without sex-bias.	Review and revise criteria for existing awards and, where possible, award without sex-bias.

Department of Education	District	School
	Ensure that the granting of all new awards is based upon merit and ability rather than the sex of the student. Persons or groups donating awards should be advised to consult the school before placing restrictions on the granting of awards.	Encourage and support the granting of all new awards on the basis of merit rather than the sex of the student. Persons or groups donating awards should be advised to consult the school before placing restrictions on the granting of awards.

Co-Curricular/Extra-Curricular Principle

Students must have opportunities to use their abilities and skills in activities and programs beyond the regular curriculum. These co-curricular and extra-curricular activities must be available to all students without the limitations imposed by bias and sex-role stereotyping.

S u p p o r t i n g A c t i v i t i e s

Department of Education	District	School
		Encourage both female and male students to participate in events such as: science fairs, athletics, drama productions, art displays, yearbook and newspaper production and other co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Ensure that advertisements for extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and contests encourage both female and male participation.

Department of Education	District	School
	Encourage and support successful male and female participants of math, science,and technology events to address their peers in order to increase participation.	Arrange for successful male and female participants of math, science, and technology events to address all students in the school.
	Ensure that judges for all competitions include both females and males.	Arrange for both female and male judges for all competitions.
	Review criteria for funding and encourage the equitable distribution of funds for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.	Encourage student councils to draft a budget which reflects an equitable distribution of funds so that all students are served equitably. Students should not be deprived access to adequate funds as a result of bias or sex-role stereotyping.
Compile and distribute a list of available videos and films portraying both female and male students in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.	Encourage schools to arrange practices and games so that prime times are shared equally by both male and female students.	Ensure that prime times for practices and games are shared equally by both male and female students.

FUTURE ACTION

The sex-equity principles presented in this document can be supported through positive action. Some activities will be much easier to initiate than others. For example, collecting statistical information on male/female course enrollment will require less effort than introducing all-inclusive language within a school district. It is important therefore, that the implementation of the guideline begin slowly with one or more supporting activities. This will gradually raise the awareness level in the school system and signify that the sex-equity process is moving forward.

Representatives of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Women's Issues in Education together with appropriate Department staff will be available to lead a discussion on this document. For further information please contact: Senior Advisory Group on Women's Issues in Education, Department of Education, P.O. Box 6000, Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1, or telephone (506) 453-2155.